COUNTDOWN TO NATIONALS

For Immediate Release

"If anything we've got more balance this year. Everyone can play good ball and there is very little difference between the top nine or ten men on the squad"

So stated Loyola's head Basketball Coach Doug Daigneault back in October about this year's edition of his famed Warriors. The team is not only proving that he was right in his remarks but are also showing that again they are by far the class of the Ottawa St. Lawrence League.

They have just come off their 35th consecutive regular league win dating back to 1966, whomping the league's third place team Sherbrooke Vert et Or 140-54 breaking the present league total point scoring record.

For the first time since opening practice the Warriors have the team Daigneault had been hoping to count on throughout the season. It is almost a carbon copy of the team that placed third in the Canadian National Championships last year.

Earl Lewis is having by far his best season as a Warrior. He has upped his average to close to 20 points a game, and what is more important says Daigneault, "He has improved vastly his defense.". Earl at 6'1" is the team's leader in rebounding, and his jumping agility is still the added attraction at any Warrior home game.

His home town friend, Jim Ivy, has just completed his best game in three years when he scored 27 points and added numerous assists to his credit in leading his team-mates to an 84-70 win over cross-town rivals McGill Redmen. Since missing the first three games of the season, Jim, 6'2", has come back to be a real team leader on the court.

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All-Canadian forward, John McAuliffe, has ended his two month retirement and seems ready to pick up where he left off last year. John has been sitting out the past two months contemplating his future in basketball. But he says he now wants to prove to some people he can still play ball and will be doing it for the next month as the team prepares for the Nationals.

One of the pleasant surprises of the year has to be the superb and consistent play of junior guard, Tom Profenno, from Portland, Maine. This year he is on his way to being a unanimous league all-star, and while only 5'8" he makes up for it with desire and his hot shooting. Averaging 16 points a game, he is second in team scoring and this year is the team's leader.

Jack Contos again holds down the post position in Coach Daigneault's 1-3-1 offense. Jack has been bothered by a recurrent knee injury that has hampered him from reaching full potential. He is last year's winner of Loyola's Athlete of the Year Award.

Alternating with Jack is Brooklyn native Jerry Walsh, originally a high school football player. Jerry has come off the bench to start the last several outings and according to Coach Daigneault has improved 100%. His biggest asset to the team is his ability to take the ball towards the basket to draw the necessary fouls.

Another New Yorker, Greg Gill, is one of three rookies on this year's team. At 6'3", Greg gives the team the rebounding strength they lacked last year. Although averaging only 8 points a game, he's one of the main reasons for this year's improvement in the team.

From nearby Bergenfield, New Jersey is sophomore guard Dave Burke. Being one of the better ball controllers in the league, Dave at 5'11" is Daigneault's third guard on the squad. Although below his scoring average of last year, he again has proven his worth to the team.

Holding down the final guard spot is first year man Jim Fahey, 5'10". Coach Daigneault has been high on him since the start of the season and others can see why. "Jim", says his coach," always gives us 100% effort on the court and his desire is great." He's another big reason why the Warriors are in national contention. His best game to date has been a 10 point output against Aroostook State in Acadia's Tip-Off Tournament in November.

The third rookie on the squad is one of Loyola's best all-round athletes, Brian O'Keffe, 6'1". Previously to this year, Brian quarter-backed the Junior Varsity football team and also represented the college in the league's tennis playdowns. And now as a Warrior, the Buffalo native is often called upon to put his rebounding strength to the team's advantage. Since Christmas he has come into his down as a ballplayer and this year mark's the first time Brian has played organized basketball.

After sitting out most of last year, junior forward Gene Laurence has returned to the Warriors lineup and has been paying dividends ever since. Third in team scoring and rebounding has made Gene a logical choice as an all-star. Because of his consistent scoring from the corners, Gene has been elevated by Coach Daigneault to a starting role with the Warriors this year.

Loyola also has the best Montreal High School player of two years ago in Harvey Kessler, 6'1". He's been valuable to the team with his consistent foul shooting, in which he ranks first percentage-wise on the squad. "Harvey has come a long way since high school", quotes Daigneault, "and we are counting on him this last month of the campaign."

The Warriors still have three tough non-league games to play in preparation for this year's Nationals. Saturday they travel to Malone, N.Y. to take on the Plattsburg State quintet and again hope to retain the town's Winter Carnival trophy. They won last year's game after an excruciating 12 minutes of overtime. The team returns to play in their own carnival game Wednesday, February 4th against cross-town rivals McGill Redmen, which is already a sell-out.

Clarkson University from Upper-State, New York visits the Warriors Wigwam the following week for the first time.

So, after these three rough tests, Daigneault should know how well the Warriors will fare in the Canadian Championships.

Two nights ago the Warriors clinched their third straignt Ottawa-St. Lawrence League title win. They handled Sir George Williams University quite easily, 87-53. Daigneaulthopes that with this all-around team effort, this squad will maintain the momentum to go all the way.

The next month will tell for sure whether the Warriors will come home from Hamilton, Ont. the site of this year's Nationals, with the silverware.